How to / Trackmania / Trackmaking / Marketing

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Introduction to marketing strategies ?

I know that lots of creative people have a rather romantic impression about, how they could publish their selfmade tracks, get acknowledged by others, making a name for themselves in the Trackmania world and all that...

In real life, and of course in the Trackmania community as well, you'll have to utilise some "**hidden mechanisms**" to become more successful at what you do, some of them beeing a bit questionable..

The decisive reason to write a little article about some vitally important strategies is, that I've seen way too many talented new authors, who ultimately gave up producing creative things like driving tracks, because they got too disappointed by the lack of feedback and acknowledgement for their productions, leaving them with the feeling of beeing "just not good enough"...

In my eyes, that's a shame. Mania Creative is all about insight, and that's what you'll get.

Track quality

If your selfmade tracks are plain bad, noone and nothing can help you. Let's talk about some procedures which enable you to ensure that the quality of your products is good enough for the competition.

Inspiration

You might have read about ' good trackmaking style '. It's clever to listen to established authors to get an general idea of what works and what does not work in Trackmania.

And it's never wrong to go out there and take a good look at other tracks. You might find something amazingly special, some new ideas or tile combinations, which you could add to your own trackmaking repertoire.

With a growing understanding of different styles, your own trackmaking style will become much better. After all, your own style will be your unique "trademark", so refine it as much as you can.

Additional thoughts
Even if you're sparkling with inspiration and new track ideas, don't try use them all at once. Putting too many different things into 1 track can easily destroy the track's "theme", making it look unimpressive or even chaotic.

Quality of trackworks

I can't stress enough, how important it is, to become familiar with all the trackbuilding and mediatracker techniques. Trackmania is several years old and here are hundreds of thousands of tracks out there, so even freshmen authors must meet high expectations. Proper craftsmanship is the minimum to expect from an author...

If you have the feeling, that the track you're building doesn't fully work as intended, don't even think about publishing it. Take your time to refine it and if that doesn't work, break it down and start all over again.

Whenever you introduce your selfmade tracks to the public, make sure that they meet (your own) highest standards of trackmaking.
That means that you must be 100% convinced that the track is as good as you could possibly make it.
If you don't believe in the quality of your tracks, noone else will...

Additional thoughts
When you're in the process of making a track, it won't hurt to casually mention this fact whenever you're talking to other people, no matter where, in your messenger software or within the game chat...
Point out, how much work you put into that production and why it will be attractive for people to play...
Giving people the feeling that they're somehow involved in this "great process" (even only as listeners or bystanders) may get them attached to the final product more easily.

Beta testing

Beta testing means, that you show your unfinished track to selected people, in order to get ideas on what to improve or change before the track gets published.
You can do this by by sending unfinished track files to people via mail/messenger, or opening up your own little testing server within the Trackmania game.

It's a preliminary quality control for what you've built so far, very useful if you're unsure about cetain elements of your track. Even experienced authors use "beta testing" from time to time.

Beta testing is only useful, if you chose **the right group of people** for it, people who honestly tell you, **what** they think must be improved and **why** it must be **improved.**

Forget about your clan comrades and usual online buddies: They tend to say "It's good" much too easily, because they like you and/or want to avoid discussing this topic for too long...

Forget about casual drivers: Don't trust the judgement of people, who can't tell the throttle from their brakes. Those people can honestly tell you, if they like it or not, but if you're out to create some sophisticated and maxed out driving track, these people have no clue how such a track is made.

Instead try to get some **experienced authors and drivers** to look at your track/s.
These people are usually rather busy (guess why), so keep on asking them until you find someone, who is willing to give you some substantial feedback.

Additional thoughts
• Beta testers often feel commited to the track they tested with a high probability of supporting you when the track is beeing published.

• If you can drag popular people into the slipstream of your track, it will appeal to lots of other users as well.. It's never bad to have popular names appear in your track's intro (as betatesters) or in the listing of TMX awards.

Special occasions / purposes

If you explicitly create a track for a special purpose or group, chances are high that people will show genuine interest in your product.

Additional thoughts

• You'd be surprised how well it works to appeal to peoples' feelings. Making tracks for occasions like christmas can draw lots of interest to your tracks, especially when your tracks are spiced up with nice graphics/signs and music.

• Clans are greedy for acknowledgement. Creating a good track for a clan will guarantee you their personal support and honest interest in your future tracks, too.

• Creating tribute tracks is a splendid thing to do. Not only that the tributed popular author will acknowledge you and your work, but connecting your track to his name will draw other peoples' attention to your track as well.

One important advice

Even if you intent to please people with your selfmade tracks, always keep your own trackmaking style and perform it as good as you can. Be honest and authentic about what you do.
Never change your style "just because" you think, that people will like your tracks more if you do so...

Publishing a track

As soon as your track is ready, you'll have to answer some important questions, which will decide about the fate of your track, whether it will be forgotten after a week or if it will still be remembered after a year..

When should you publish your track ?

In general: As soon as the track is 100% ready and you have supporters on your side.

Additional thoughts
• Don't dare to publish too many tracks in a short of amount of time. It's good to be known for manufacturing rare little gems, rather than for mass production.

• If another author publishes an extremely good and/or successful track, delay the publishment of your own track a bit, so both track won't have to compete against each other in terms of "presence in peoples' minds". Both of you would be bound to lose.

• If you're forced to publish your track at the same time (e.g. for tournaments or trackmaking competitions), make sure that your track is outstanding and really different from all others.

Where should you publish your track ?

Your 1st way should take you to: TM.Exchange.com : TMX has 2 major qualities:

■ First of all, it's a fashion catwalk. All the reputable authors will showoff their newest tracks and ideas and everybody can award the tracks and comment on them.
As soon as your track is beeing uploaded to TMX, you have 7 days for your track to enter the "Week Top10" listing, which gets you lots of public attention for your track. Don't underestimate the prestige which comes with beeing a regular "Top10" author.

■ Secondly, TMX is also a distribution turntable for all important online servers. Lots of admins come to TMX to look for the best new tracks to put on their servers. Furthermore server plugins will usually allow loading up tracks from TMX directly to the servers' track listings.

Additional thoughts

• Even TMX visitors are lazy and niggardly about giving awards. Connect your track to something people might benefit from: e.g. link it to a replay competition, promise them starvotes for finding some easter egg in the track, write their names into a "*Thank you for awarding this track*" listing etc... motivate them.

• To make your track release look more attractive, be sure to insert a flashy screenshot and an extensive description as well. Make your track look important.

If you want, you can create a video of someone driving the track, load it up to youtube and link to it in your track description.

• The more supporters you can gather, the more attention & awards your tracks will get. The more attention & awards your tracks get, the better your reputation will get.
And the better your reputation gets, the easier it will become to get new supporters.

• If you want to become successful on TMX, you need to work on establishing a list of buddies and supporters, which are looking forward to your new track releases. These people will overcome their general lazyness and review (and award) your tracks.

Of course they expect the same from you, as soon as they published a new track. **"One hand washes the other"...** without such a clique, you'll stand little to no chance on TMX. Realise that as quickly as you can.

• Showcases on TMX are hard to get... not. If you know the people well, who do the showcases and your track is after their personal taste, your chances of getting your track into the showcase increase A LOT.

Conclusion:
TMX is 90% about reputation, support and who you know. Of course that's not the "idea" behind TMX, and noone says that this is really fair, but that's how it is.

Your 2nd way should take you to the online servers.

Take your tracks to wherever people welcome you & your tracks or new tracks in general. If you have a clan server or some other "homebase", take your tracks there first. Usually they can be directly uploaded from TMX and people will be happy to see your newest track.

In addition to that, be sure to find and regularly visit servers in other countries, where you can upload your tracks.
This way, your tracks will be spread around the globe, much more quickly and more reliably than TMX could do the job.
It's time consuming to find servers where you can upload your tracks, but you can do a simple **calculation**:

Let's assume your track is in a server's track lineup and is played 5 times a day.
Let's assume the server is visited by 20 people in average throughout 24h of a day.
Let's assume you have managed to get your track on 10 servers.

That's 5*20 (=100) people who play your track every day on 1 server.
That's 100*7 (=700) people who play your track per week on 1 server.
That's 700*10 (=7000) people on all 10 servers who effectively played your track within 1 week, each of them spending 3 or 4 minutes with it.

7000 chances to attract people to your tracks, get your name known and maybe get them as new supporters for your tracks on TMX.

Lots of authors are considered successful because they got lots of awards on TMX from their cliques, but on real online servers, you'll never find their productions in the track lineup. Beeing a "Catwalk queen" is nothing you'd want, so honour the online servers!

Your 3rd way should take you to the forums.
Be companionable, sign up to important forums, talk to people and be present on a regular basis.

Last but not least
Don't forget to update your Manialinks page, if you're using Trackmania United. People love flashy ingame stuff, it's a good advertisement for you and your productions.

Building up your network of supporters

I already gave you some hints on how you could gather supporters around you, but I can freely say it again : "**Support is everywhere you get it**".

• Establish contacts with many people, forge links between you and fellow co-authors, strong drivers, server admins, clan people and all other people who show good will towards you and your creativity.
These people are pleasant company and your most valuable assets within Trackmania.

• Keep away from people who might devaluate your work or damage your reputation (Haters, Boosters, Hackers etc...).

Don't you lose your faith, because you might experience some disappointments when trying to establish yourself. You must keep on trying , it takes a lot of time and efforts to do so...but as soon as you have established yourself, things will become easier... promise ;-)

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